broadcasting by BBC that Genetically Modified (GM) potato is expected to be approved within the next six months; and

(b) if so, whether the health environment and safety aspects of GM potato have been evaluated?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) Yes, Sir. Recently, the Secretary, Department of Biotechnology in an interview to the British Broadcasting Corporation while explaining the excellent indigenous research done in India on potato, expressed that it is expected to complete the evaluation studies of GM potato developed by National Centre for Plant Genome Research, New Delhi, within the next six months. The data would then be put up for the consideration and approval by the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests. In this GM Potato, the gene from edible seeds of Amaranth has been transferred to another edible plant - potato.

(b) The contained open field trials of GM Potato (tuber crop) have been conducted in close collaboration with Central Potato Research Institute, Simla of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, with the permission of the Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation (RCGM), Govt. of India. The studies related to health and safety aspects completed according to the safety protocols approved by the Government showed encouraging results. Accordingly the data for further evaluation are being compiled and would be put up to the GEAC of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the clearing authority, at an early date.

Promoting S&T through NGOs in Assam

1463. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have supported NGOs in Assam financially to promote science & technology in the State;

(b) if so, which are the beneficiaries;

(c) whether any assistance has been given to Assam Science Society and its districts branches; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) Yes, Sir. Promotion of S&T in Assam as in other States is done through academic, research institutions, State Government organisations and science-based NGOs.

(b) The beneficiaries in each project are well identified sections of the community *viz.* poorer sections of the community, women, school students, etc.

(c) Assam Science Society, Guwahati has been sanctioned action research projects from time to time.

(d) Over the past five years an amount of about Rs. 10.00 lakhs has been released for new and on-going projects to the Assam Science Society, Guwahati.

Projects under STED in Tamil Nadu

1464. SHRI THANGA TAMIL SELVAN:
SHRI R. KAMARAJ:

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is only 33 locations all over the country where projects under Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Development are functioning to undertake training to local youths for enabling self-employment;

(b) the details of such projects, under STED scheme, in Tamil Nadu;

(c) whether Government have any proposal to set up micro enterprises under STED during the Tenth Five Year Plan in Tamil Nadu; and

(d) if so, the details thereof; and if not, the reasons therefor?